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VOLUME 52—NO. 5
OLDEST PAPER IN WESTERN KENTUCKY

HICKMAN, FULTON COUNTY, KENTUCKY, THURSDAY, JULY 20, 1911.

WHOLE NO. 2457
ESTABLISHED IN THE YEAR 1859

Letter from Syria

BY A. S. BARKETT

Trip to The Holy Land (Continued)

Judedit, Margeon,
Syria, Turkey.

June 7, 1911.

Memrs. Speer & Sexton,
Hickman, Ky., U. S. A.

Dear Friends:

Wednesday morning, April 19th we got ready, hired a carriage and went out to Bethlehem, the place where Christ was born. It took us only a little over an hour to drive to the place, due south of Jerusalem. A few miles south of the Holy City we came to a convent called Mar Elias or St. Elijah Church in the hands of the French monks. A little piece further we got to a little field noted for the time when St. Mary and Jesus, the child, were going from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and that little field was a patch of peas and the Jews who were picking the peas, when they were asked by Mary to give them some peas for they were hungry, denied them. St. Mary cursed the pea patch so the pea patch, by the power of God, turned to stones, and till now, any time you should pass, you can see some people picking up some of those little stony peas. A little further, is a place which used to be the home of Rachel, in the Old Testament, and this old home is in the hands of the Jews today. On every holy day the Jews visit that sacred place and pray humbly to God to give them back their land and send them their king to rule them. Three miles further, we came to the old city of Bethlehem which is now a good sized place of about 10,000 people—about 4,000 being of foreign countries. The country around is rocky and rough. It is covered up with olive trees which look like have been set out before Christ and right in the city the people are employed in the manufacture of pearls, and turn them to all kinds of novelties such as pearl knives, pen handles, cuff buttons, etc. Syrian firms have factories of their own in Bethlehem. The inhabitants still wear the same style clothes they wore before Christ—long robes with a long cap on their heads with several pieces of old money all over it covered up with a large and long piece of white lawn. They think it is something awful to uncover it. I had to beg one of them awfully hard to let me see it. They have a special name for their cap—Shobwa. Their women are pretty, strong, tall and healthy.

The men wear the old fashioned caps with 25 yards of white lawn rolled around it. I asked one of them how could he stand it and he said being used to it. The people of Bethlehem in general are very clever and good hearted. Some of the houses are old as the hills and some newly built. On the northern side of the city is the famous and most sacred place

where Jesus Christ was born. Today it stands as simple and humble as it did 2,000 years ago. Close to the birthplace of Jesus stands the old well of the King of the Jews, where many children were thrown, thinking at that time that the baby Christ was one of them. But St. Mary took her beloved son and hid him forty days and nights in an old don some little distance from his birthplace, which we saw as natural as if St. Mary herself was present. Around it is built a great and fine church by the French monks. After walking around the city a while, and after eating our lunch we started back to Jerusalem. To the west of Bethlehem about two miles and a half is the old city of Beth Jala and some few miles to the south Bethany so that evening we returned to Jerusalem.

Next morning was a great day in Jerusalem. It was the day of the foot washing of the 12 Bishops by the Betreyark, resembling our Lord Jesus Christ when he washed the feet of his twelve disciples; that day the people gathered in the yard of the big church. In the center of the yard a long, high stage was placed with a high chair at the head and several small chairs to the right and left of the big chair for the disciples and aides of the head man of the church, who is the Betreyark. After the people gathered and filled the church, yard, the top of the church and balconies, the balconies and the high places, there were between fifty and sixty thousand people, with about a thousand soldiers and court officials to keep order. After getting everything ready there came the Betreyark, bishops, priests and church officials, all dressed in the finest of regalia and costly crowns, with about ten finely dressed guards walking in front of the party, holding long silver tipped canes and tapping them on the hard ground as they walked. As this party came to the stage, the Betreyark, assisted by his party, mounted the stage and walked to the big chair, followed by the bishops, who took their seats as they were prepared for them. It seemed that each one took his seat by age and name. When each was seated properly, the services commenced—the Betreyark stood up and blessed the congregation, then his party undressed him so he could do his work easily. The assistants had towels, a silver pitcher and washpan, then the Betreyark threw the towel over his shoulder and pitcher in his hand and one of his assistants held the pan. The right foot of each disciple was washed, after which the Betreyark dried the foot and kissed it all according to the age of the bishop, after which two of the bishops washed the Betreyark's foot. After this ceremony was over, a special priest stood up and read a chapter in the new Testament in the Arabic, Greek, Turkish and Russian languages, after which the services were con-

cluded. The Betreyark and his party walked to their homes dressed in their official robes and the people crowded all around them. It was certainly a sight worth seeing. We stood on a high platform, paying \$1 a head. There stood by us three American ladies from Richmond, Va. I forgot to mention that an English bishop from India stood on the stage with the disciples and he seemed to understand the Greek language and knew one or more of the bishops.

Next morning, Friday, the 21st, we started to Mount Olive, which is about two miles east of Jerusalem. We walked part of the way so as not to miss anything. At the northeastern gate of the old city of Jerusalem stands the great church of St. Mary where she lived a long time while Jesus was growing up, also the bath house of St. Mary, which is today known by the same name, just outside of the wall. As you step out of the gate is the grave yard of the Mohammedans. Down the hill a little piece is the old home and garden of Steephonous and adjoining it is the Garden of Gethsemane, and an old town by that name in the valley between Jerusalem and Mount Olive. The garden where Jesus and his disciples ate their supper and he told them after two days He would be taken from them and would see them at the Sea of Galilee and one of them would betray Him. So they ate their supper and Jesus prayed three times, after which they went up to Mount Olive and Jesus told them that the time had come for all of them to deny Him. But Peter said "Master, if all would deny you I never will." Jesus answered him, "Peter, Peter, you will deny me before the cock crows three times." I saw the same spot. The Garden of Gethsemane is today as pretty a spot as I ever saw. It is in the hands of the French convent. Right east of it on the other side of the street is the great and famous church of the Russian Emperors—that is the church was built at their expense. They say Peter II and Nicholas I are buried in the church. It is said the church cost a million dollars.

South of Gethsemane is the old well of King David and some say it is the well of Pharaoh of Egypt. But it is King David's well because it is at the edge of the Jewish graveyard of the olden time. The tombstones on the Jewish graves are flat, carved in the old Hebrew language.

South of the Jewish grave yard about one mile lays the well or spring of Silvan, the well known place in the Bible. After seeing all we could in the valley we hired some asses and rode to the top of Mount Olive. We went to the great Russian church which has a high tower. We went up to the top of it from which we saw the Dead Sea some twenty miles away. The whole country for a hundred miles around can be seen from this tower. At the edge of Mount Olive to the southeast is the old home of Lazarus. But the most important thing we saw was the place where Jesus arose to heaven and where He stood on the rock with a stick in his hand. We saw the mark of his foot and stick in the rock. This place is guarded by some old Mohammedans appointed by the government. At a recent date this place was in the hands of Christians but because they could not agree the government took charge of it. It is the most sacred and important place on Mount Olive. Uncle Sam would no doubt give millions of dollars to own the spot where our Saviour ascended to heaven. In all my traveling I never saw one of these sacred places in the hands of Americans. All other nations spend millions of dollars to get to own these holy places and the great majority is in their hands and in my own estimation that little spot where Jesus lived and died is worth half the continent.

Next morning, April 22, was the most important day of the week in Jerusalem, because Saturday is always remembered by Christians as the day on which Christ rose to heaven. Something like 60,000 people got in the church to see the light burst from the tomb of Christ. People crowded in the church from all the countries in the world. At least 50 different nations were represented in that church that day. Big sums of money were paid by the visitors to sit in. A little before 1:00 p. m., the Betreyark and his party entered the church and went into the tomb and two of the priests stayed in the tomb about fifteen minutes. Then there was heard a great thunder and the



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light of Jesus burst from the rock that was on the tomb and everyone present lit up his bunch of candles from the light and let me tell you, dear people it was a great sight to see the burning candles all over that holy place. Each one would hold the candles with their hands, put them against their clothes and flesh but did not burn anyone. Some strangers and unbelievers to see such would run away, fearing lest they would be burned to death. But by the power of God, no one was hurt.

Next letter will complete our visit to the Holy Land. Luck to all. The time is drawing nearer to see you all.

Your friend,
A. S. BARKETT

Go to Sullivan Bros. for odd pants.

Oille James will be forty years old the 27th of this month. He got his birthday present at the primary—July 1st.

High Bridge, erected at a cost of \$1,000,000 across Kentucky river by the Queen and Crescent route, has been completed. It stands 320 feet above low water mark.

To destroy ants, place a wet sponge that has been dipped in sugar water where they gather. The ants, will soon fill the sponge. When full, drop the sponge in hot water. Continue until all of the ants disappear. This method is effective and cleanly.

Republicans who are taking an interest in the coming campaign in Kentucky are disgusted that President Taft has decided not to come to this state Oct. 26 to attend the Lincoln Farm dedication at Hodgenville because he fears his visit may be construed as an attempt to help the State ticket. The dedication date will be shifted to November.

A good shower fell in this section Sunday morning.

The nomination of Judge O'Rear was a death blow to the regime of Augustus the First.

In her application for divorce, a western woman named 107 affidavits. Evidently she waited until all the returns were in.

Two big merchandise sales are advertised in this issue of the Courier. Economical shoppers will find them of special interest.

Our good friend Lloyd Brown, of the Brownsville vicinity, presented the Courier editors a box of pencils last week that were as fine as can be found in the world. They were of the Champion variety, and one of them measured 11½ inches in circumference. Taken all around, it is hard to beat Fulton county.

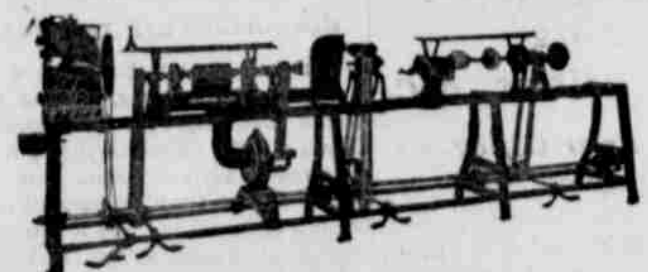
Don't forget our special offer on buggies to clean up.—Hickman Hdw. Co.

Nobody need apologize for voting the Democratic ticket from end to end this fall.

Gen. H. A. Tyler went to Harrisburg, Miss., Friday to attend an anniversary celebration of the battle fought at that place. The first man killed in this fight was of Gen. Tyler's company. He had just handed the General a letter from Gen. Lee, and was shot and killed while sitting on his horse waiting for the letter to be read. Gen. Tyler, after considerable effort, has located the grave of this soldier and is having a monument erected to his memory. A large monument will also be erected on the old battle field commemorating the gallant Confederates who fell in this awful slaughter.

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